



## Press Release: For Whom It Stands: The Flag and the American People

Date: May 2, 2014

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### ***For Whom It Stands: The Flag and the American People*** May 17, 2014 - February 28, 2015

Inspired by  
the untold story of the  
African American  
behind the  
Star-Spangled Banner



*TeKeyia and David* by Sheila Pree Bright

May 1, 2014 - The new exhibition *For Whom It Stands: The Flag and the American People* explores the U.S. flag and the diversity of Americans for whom the flag stands, as represented through artwork

and artifacts.

The exhibition is inspired by Grace Wisher, the 13-year old African American girl who contributed to the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner as an indentured servant in Mary Pickersgill's household. The exhibition is on view May 17, 2014 - February 28, 2015, in conjunction with the 200th anniversary of the Star-Spangled Banner. The press preview is Wednesday, May 14 at 9am at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, 830 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD. Email [marketing@maamc.org](mailto:marketing@maamc.org) (<mailto:marketing@maamc.org>) to RSVP.

## **The African American contributor to the Star-Spangled Banner**

During the War of 1812, flag maker Mary Pickersgill sewed the original Star-Spangled Banner in a house on the same city block as the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. While Pickersgill's story is well-known, less mentioned is the story of Grace Wisher. Wisher's personal effects are not on display and may have been lost to history. Her untold story urged us to share other stories about the flag, so that they are not lost.

## **Stories span pride to protest**

*For Whom It Stands* features more than 100 works of art, artifacts, documents, and photographs that reflect the breadth of American experiences. *The Veteran* is a mixed media work on skateboard by Rafael Colón, a self-taught Puerto Rican artist. *A Tribute to New York City* sculpted by Israeli-American Dalya Luttwak sits in the same show as *Prayer Rug for America*, by the Arab American, Helen Zughaib. Other pieces include a photograph of the Navajo code talkers who communicated the message to our U.S. soldiers to raise the flag at the Battle of Iwo Jima, and a mixed media work by Chinese-American Flo Oy Wong about the detention of Chinese immigrants at Angel Island. [View images from the exhibition.](http://www.rflawmuseum.org/FWIS) (<http://www.rflawmuseum.org/FWIS>)

A fragment of the original Star-Spangled Banner serves as a starting point to investigate the broad history and representation of the United States flag as an icon of our nation and its people. A sound installation selected by music curator Shodekeh features pivotal interpretations of the national anthem.

"*For Whom It Stands* seeks to tell the stories of the flag with a wide-angled perspective in which we all can see ourselves reflected in the national fabric," says the exhibition's curator, Dr. Michelle Joan Wilkinson.

## **Key Programs**

### **New Mural at City Springs School Unveiled May 17, 2014**

Fine art photographer and artist-in-residence Sheila Pree Bright photographed museum visitors and students of City Springs School during her residency. She asked the subjects to pose with the flag to elicit their opinions on what it means to be American. Select portraits are the source for two new photo installations: one inside the museum and the second at City Springs Elementary/Middle School, 100 South Caroline Street in Baltimore, Maryland. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake visits the

installation process at City Springs School on May 14 at 11 am.

**Premiere Performance: O Say Can You Feel - Stories Inspired by National Flags**  
**May 17, 2014. 11am & 1pm**

In this premiere performance, several individuals share their true stories of flag-related memories, including a man who was neighbors with the men who brutally murdered Emmett Till and who then lost his fiancée on 9/11. Weaving music, poetry, movement, and song throughout, this original program stirs us to reflect on our own relationship to our flag, our country, and to each other. The director, Harriet Lynn of Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium, leads a post-performance discussion between the participants and the audience.

**Caribbean Heritage and Wave Your Flag Celebration**  
**June 14, 2014. 12-4pm**

During Caribbean American Heritage Month, we screen *The Merikens*, a documentary about a community in Trinidad descended from enslaved people of the Chesapeake. The ancestors of Merikens were runaway slaves who joined the British forces during the War of 1812. In exchange for their service, they were resettled in a British colony after the war. St. Veronica's Youth Steel Orchestra closes out the afternoon with a Caribbean-style rendition of our National Anthem. The event is a part of the Smithsonian's national Raise It Up celebration.

**Companion Exhibit *For Whom It Stands, TOO* Opens**  
**July 1, 2014-September 14, 2014**

The museum held an open call for flag-related artwork. Selected works are included in *For Whom It Stands*, and in this companion exhibition. *For Whom It Stands, TOO* will be on view at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House & Museum, 844 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

**The National Anthem, Remixed**  
**September 14, 2014. 5pm**

Renowned beat box artist Shodekeh leads a new interpretation of the national anthem using virtuoso vocal percussion. Performers include the Baltimore Boom Bap Society, a group that performs improvised hip hop, and Classical Revolution, a collection of classically-trained musicians who perform classical music in unexpected places.

*The exhibition and programs have been financed in part with State Funds from the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, an instrumentality of the State of Maryland. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission.*

**About the Reginald F. Lewis Museum**

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture is Baltimore's premier facility highlighting the history and accomplishments of African Americans with a special focus on Maryland's African American community. A Smithsonian affiliate, the museum is the East Coast's largest African American museum, occupying an 82,000 square-foot facility with ample permanent and special exhibition space,

interactive learning environments, auditorium, resource center, oral history recording studio, museum shop, café, classrooms, meeting rooms, outside terrace and reception areas. The museum is located near Baltimore's Inner Harbor at the corner of Pratt and President Streets. The museum is also accessible on Baltimore's Charm City Circulator Orange and Green Routes. For more information, please call 443-263-1800 or visit [www.RFLewisMuseum.org](http://www.RFLewisMuseum.org) (<http://rflewismuseum.org/>)



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